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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000471

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: BORDER DEMARCATON WITH MACEDONIA ON TRACK

Classified By: CDA TINA KAITANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The International Civilian Office (ICO) briefed Poloff September 8 on the Kosovo-Macedonia border demarcation process, saying that three of four sectors along the border are complete, and they expect all primary marking stones to be in place by September 19. Laying secondary stones will take longer, and ICO expects the full process to last until March 2009 or longer. Current agreements do not specify whether it is the primary or secondary stones that are the essential element to concluding the agreement on demarcating the border, and ICO reports that it has rebuffed an attempt by one Macedonian commission member at linking conclusion to the secondary stones. With primary stones now in place in the most politically sensitive areas of the border and Kosovo's political commitment to the process clear, the demarcation should be considered largely complete, fulfilling Macedonia's desire to have this finished before their recognition of Kosovo. END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) The ICO's Deputy Head of the Security Advisory Unit, Andrew Michels, on September 8 provided Poloff with a status update on the Kosovo-Macedonia border demarcation process. Michels said that discussions on Sectors 1, 2, and 4 (of four total) were complete, and their primary marking stones are in place. He predicts that Sector 3 will be complete by September 19. Above all, he said, the cooperation between Kosovo and Macedonia has been excellent.

¶2. (SBU) Among the four sectors along the Kosovo-Macedonia border, Sector 4 has been the most sensitive, with many residents along the border fearful that their property would be divided across the proposed new border. The Joint Technical Commission (JTC) on the demarcation of the border used a provision within the 2001 Delineation Agreement to adjust the planned border by up to 150 meters in order to accommodate property lines. Michels suspects the JTC may have exceeded the 150 meter limit in certain instances, but he said that both sides of the JTC agreed to the changes, and he does not expect any problems or challenges.

¶3. (SBU) According to Michels, Sector 3, the remaining sector, should see its 25 primary stones in place by Friday, September 19, and there are no remaining political impediments to the placement of the primary border stones in this final sector. ICO's lone concern at this point is that the Kosovo government contractor manufacturing and placing

the primary stones may not be able to finish its work in Sector 3 by the proposed date. The Macedonian government has expressed its willingness to manufacture and place the stones if necessary and did so in completing Sector 4 last week. Michels said that any delay would not be longer than one week at the most. The secondary stones will take longer to place, and given challenges of terrain and weather, it is unlikely they will be ready before March 2009.

What's Next

¶15. (SBU) The Ahtisaari Plan requires the JTC to complete its work by March 2009, one year following its establishment. The Plan is silent on what defines completion, but the ICO regards the placement of primary stones as meeting the requirement.

¶14. (SBU) Michels told us that the head of the Macedonian Border Committee, Todar Nanev, called him last week in an attempt to redefine what it means to complete the border process, arguing that it is necessary for the Border Commission to complete both the primary and secondary stones.

Michels said that this is contrary to the working agreement between Kosovo and Macedonia, and ICO quashed this effort to change the rules. ICO does not expect Macedonian representatives to raise this issue again.

¶16. (SBU) The placement of secondary stones is a work in progress. The 44 secondary stones for Sectors 1 and 2 (together) are in place, but the schedule for installing secondary stones in Sectors 3 (330) and 4 (220) has not been

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determined. Due to the terrain and approaching winter, their placement is unlikely to occur before March 2009.

¶17. (C) COMMENT: Political agreement on defining the border is an essential step in securing Macedonia's recognition of Kosovo. We believe that Kosovo has fulfilled its commitments, demonstrating that it has the political will to see the process through to the end. Special kudos for the quick and effective work on the border demarcation goes to ICO and specifically to Deputy ICR Fletcher Burton, who engaged directly with the Kosovo villagers in Sector Four who threatened to derail the process, thereby ensuring their buy-in and support. Our hope is that Macedonia can now be persuaded that the time has come for recognition, enhancing stability throughout the region. END COMMENT.

KAIDANOW